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Interview with Meg Litteral

Meg Litteral

Todd Juengling

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Researcher: Todd Juengling

Event: Interview with Meg Litteral

Place: Litteral residence, Pinkley Rd, Fredericktown

Todd Juengling: I wanted to start just with some uh, if you could talk a little bit about your personal musical history, or background, or like how did you get started, interested in music?

Meg Litteral: Are we all set to go now? [TJ: yeah] Okay. Um, my parents both play uh the piano really well, and they met in high school. My dad played the bass in a jazz band and my mom played the piano. And that's kind of how they met and then you know eventually dad went into the navy, but they, you know got married eventually and we all had to take piano lessons. You know when you're a kid you have to take it, but we enjoyed it. And so when we turned 8 years old we all began piano. There was 5 girls. And so I grew up with piano, piano, piano, and it was all mostly classical and the old hymns is what I grew up hearing all the time so I um, you know, just had all that classical in my ears all the time. My mom would play classical music constantly, um, and then I heard a quartet in school, in public school I heard a famous quartet at my public school play at an assembly and it was just like something hit me right then, I had to play the violin. And it was just like, I came home, I said Mom I have to play the violin. So we looked into it at the school, and of course there was opportunities at the school and that was when I was about almost 11, I was 10 years old. And um, so she always was one to you know encourage us in interests that we had, and so I took private lessons with the best teacher in Toledo, I just just lucked out really big time and was able to get in with private lessons almost as soon as I started taking violin at the public school. Because the public school that I went to, the orchestra teacher was really close friends with this other private teacher, they were really good buddies, and so she must have seen something in the way I began, you an just tell if a child has, you know, potential, and she got me right in with this private teacher. And so basically from the time I was 10, I took classical violin and played in orchestras and you know I just loved it and took private lessons clear till I was 18 and then I was engaged and my mom said well it's probably time to stop, you know, since I was gonna be getting married, but I took piano and violin at the same time until I was in 8th or 9th grade, and then my mom said, really one or the other, because I had other sisters that wanted to take it and financially they couldn't be doing a lot of that. And so I did play and get a few scholarships to help with lessons through high school, through the orchestra leagues, you know. But um, I dropped the piano but I never quit playing and that was the one thing that was really important and I'm glad that I didn't. I kept challenging myself all the time with you know, harder and harder things, almost self-taught myself farther and farther along. And um, after I got married, my father in law asked me if I'd heard of an orchestra in Upper Arlington. He's the fire chief of Upper Arlington, Ohio. And I just didn't even think I would ever be able to play in an orchestra like that, but it was a community symphony and that was my first taste of playing with a, you know a community symphony, and even though I had little kids and was having them every year, you know, I managed to get to rehearsals and drag them you know everywhere I went when I played, and so I played in the upper Arlington symphony for seven years, then um, we moved, and I played with the Otterbein College symphony, which would be the Westerville symphony, played with those two groups at the same time. But always in the back of my mind I would hear fiddle music, you know, because my husband kind of liked

country music a little bit and I remember when we were first married he just asked me out of the blue, could you ever play fiddle? And I remember my reaction, because I thought I was just this sophisticated violinist. I remember kind of stiffening, you know, I beg your pardon? You know, like it would be below me to play the fiddle. Well I had no clue, you know. So I bought a book that said you know teach yourself how to play, and I played, played the music no problem, cause I could read anything, being you know brought up reading music, bound by the printed page, I could play anything but it sounded very violiny, you know I didn't have the style or anything like that. And now and then as I played I would get stuff out and just have fun with it, but it was never anything serious. And I um, I would have one or two students, you know when my kids were little, tiny, that like, high school kids I would teach violin or piano. But nothing real serious. But um, I got into more and more teaching as my kids got older and didn't need me right there, you know with them. I home schooled um from the time that they were in grade school, but I would just have students like on Friday afternoons. And it gradually, as they got older, I would increase it to a couple afternoons and by now I'm teaching full time. So that's how the teaching came about, just kind of word of mouth and it spread. Well, 5 years ago, um we went up to Malabar Farm for one their heritage days celebrations, and they have just groups of instrumentalists playing different places on the farm. And I just started listening a little more closely, and I started getting really fascinated with the fiddle stuff, because I realized that there's a lot more to it than just songs, it's a whole, whole style that, you know, is something that has to be learned or just, you know, you're brought up with hearing it. So I thought, well, this looks kind of interesting, and um, then another six months went by and they had their maple sugar-off, and you had to go in cause it was cold and in that little cute cabin there was another group playing, and I recognized some of the same people playing. And they were playing Irish music. And I was like, ooh now this is neat. So that was like four years ago. And I thought how am I gonna learn this stuff? And I said I'd just jump in. So I asked em, I kind of cornered somebody afterward, I said you know, these groups, are they organized groups of people? How do I tap into this kind of thing? And they said, well we come up here to the cabin on Monday nights and we just jam, and if you want to learn, you can learn. If you already know, you jump in. If you want to bring music along, bring music along. So here I come Monday night with my books and my music stand and everybody else in there is just sitting in a chair with no music, and I'm going, oh, you know. But gradually I kept going, and kept going, and found out about other jams of Scottish and Irish music, and gradually I started getting a feel for the beat and the different way that the old time music, you know, the accents on the notes, the bowing is different. And by now it's been four years and I've got my own band. And so it just kinda, that's how it evolved and I have a great respect for fiddlers who have never used music, because I know, I now how hard it is for my to pull away from the music. I'm thinking all the time, how am I gonna do this, I don't have notes? But it's starting to, starting to be a feel now instead of. And, and I try to teach my students, when they first come, if they say they want to play the violin, I introduce little bits of things that have to do with fiddle music, so that if they get to a point then they can decide, I kinda like this better. And when I have a student that comes to me strictly wanting to play fiddle, I approach the teaching of the instrument totally different than I do with classical, after they've got the fundamentals down. Because I don't have, I have different emphasis on bowing, and I have different emphasis on you know, the way they hold their instrument, because there's a difference,

so that's my history [laugh] basically on how, how I play and how I got it.

TJ: Can you say a little bit more about the difference between teaching classical and?

ML: Teaching the two? Yeah, um as far as the serious students that I have right now that want to take violin as a classical instrument, they have a hour lesson, the serious ones. And the first half hour of playing, they will run through a section of scales and exercises, etudes, and um patterns, and small pieces that will help them with their um shifting, position work. And then we spend part of the lesson on a, a work, a classical piece that's they're working on that year or that semester or whatever. And um a lot of emphasis on correctness of bowing, correctness of you know the fingering uh position, just disciplines that, you know, they're going to work on during the week that I help them with when they come. And of course intonation for both fiddle and violin, I'm really really picky about that. I, I want to hear them fix it. If I hear them play a wrong note, and then they fix it, I like that. Rather than if they just keep playing and not fix it at all. Fixing it by meaning, you know, they'll come up to the note if it's flat or go back down if it's sharp. Now the fiddlers, the finger exercises are different because fiddlers use double string a little bit more on the licks that they do. Um, I might incorporate a scale for the fiddlers that would use a fiddle-type bowing. One's called potato, where it's po-ta-to-po-ta-to, daa-da-da-daa-da-da, which is a fiddle pattern that comes a lot in music. So I'll take, they still do scales because it helps them with their ear training, but they might use a bowing that would go with the scale, or the scale that they're doing goes along with a fiddle tune that they're working on. Since it's, if it's, if they're working in the key of D I have a tendency to work in a certain key with the fiddlers, because they're like 3 main keys that are easy for fiddlers, it'd be G, D and A. And so we'll work on the key of A for like 4 weeks, and really get the key of A down. So all their stuff would be focused around the key of A, finger patterns, and I do spend a good 20 minutes with the fiddlers on the bowing and you know listening skills, but it's got a different emphasis. And then we take a [?], we have tunes that they're working on, and with fiddlers I emphasize memorizing them as soon as possible. Pull away from the music as soon as you've got it down. I have em turn towards me, play it by ear, and that seems to work really well. Where the violinists, we're usually pretty focused on our music and you know, after they've learned the piece they'll memorize it, but they do more of the reading. Um, fiddlers we do a lot of listening to tapes and trying to copy what we hear. Um, a lot of it is that, you hear a fiddler and you like what they did, try to do it like they did, you know. So, there's a little different emphasis during the hour on what, you know, what exactly they play, but mostly it's the style where the bow usually is the whole bow when you do classical, and when you do fiddle it's a lot easier to work faster on some of the stuff using the upper half. And you can pull the emphasis down. So we do a lot of, just you know, bow work and things like that. So there's little differences there in the way I, you know, the way I do things. And that's, the violin's not straight up. When they're playing the fiddle, it doesn't matter, you know, it's like one of those things where that doesn't matter. They're going to be sittin around in a circle, you know standing with one leg up on a hay bale, so it doesn't matter if they're not exactly horizontal with the floor there. Where a classical violinist, it's going to be important to have a good position, because maybe they'll be playing in a symphony or playing a solo somewhere, and you want that position to be really nice. So, some

things are a little more relaxed with the fiddle, but still they, they have to learn the basics first. So that's the difference, basically the style really the different, the differences in the instruments are very minute as far as violin and fiddle.

TJ: So did you learn the fiddle music primarily from books, or primarily from, just from playing.
TJ: what are the differences?

ML: well, the fiddle strings a lot of times you'll get a string that will have more of a ring to it, where a violin string you want one that is mellow and has a more you know subtle tone. Um, the instrument makes a difference. I have 3 fiddles and 1 good concert violin, my good concert violin of course I spent a lot of money on, my bow is very very good. Not that fiddles have to be necessarily a cheaper instrument, but I have fiddles that I don't mind tossing in the case and going and playing and maybe I'd be playing out in the weather, you know, or playing under a roof where it might be raining. Or out in the sun, where I wouldn't want to really expose my good violin to that kind of weather and temperature change because it affects the wood. And so I wanted to get a couple instruments that I wouldn't feel bad about doing that, you know. Because I don't have a ton of money invested in them but they still have a pretty decent sound. So, and there's a could differences in the tuners down at the base of the violin, at the tailpiece. Often fiddlers will use a tailpiece where the tuners are all in 1 piece, because you're quite frequently retuning for different instruments, because you've got guitars, mandolins, banjos, and in the weather you're gonna have fluctuations in your tuning. So you want those fine tuners so you don't have to be constantly working the pegs, working the pegs. Where a concert violin, normally you'll have maybe one tuner on the E string, because the E is more difficult to keep tuning back and forth, and the others don't have any tuners at all; they just use the pegs. So that um, kind of one of the major differences. So, um, other than that, you know, personal preference. Bows and violins, it's what you like to hear, you know.

TJ: So with the strings, is it a difference in gauge, or is it just?

ML: Um, there are different gauges, but it's the, whether it's silver wrapped, or gut stings, um, they have um [?], and they have um, just tungsten, they've got different man-made materials that the string are wrapped with, or they have straight steel strings now that normally the old fiddlers, old-time, they use those straight steel strings cause they've got that ring, you know, that they want to hear under the microphone when they play and it's gotta project, you know. I don't quite go for that straight steel. I've got a couple different kinds that I've tried, and um I kind of stick with a, um good quality string just because I want em to last, you know, some of the cheaper ones just don't last as long. And I'm pretty hard on my violins because they get played a lot. So, I don't know what else to say about that part.

TJ: So, how many uh students do you have for violin and fiddle?

ML: For violin and piano together, I have I think 41, and about 26 of those are piano. And then the rest are violin and fiddle, different, I think I've got like 5 or 6 that are strictly fiddle, and then the rest are violin and a couple of them do a little bit of, you know, fiddle work on the side. They

kind of like to play around with that, and when I have my recital we do group songs with the whole group, and they all enjoy doing one or two fast ones together. So, it's kind of fun.

TJ: So did you learn the fiddle music primarily from books, or primarily from, just from playing, jamming with people and just picking it up?

ML: I think it's about 50-50. Because the songs that I play with groups now probably, 80-85% of the, the people I play with are people that just play by ear, and never have opened a book. Couldn't read music if you put it in front of them. But it's all written down, most of these songs, and you can find em in books. So I've had to learn them at home, and they're helped me out, these people have helped me out by giving me tapes with a lot of the songs on them, and basically it's just hearing them over and over and over, and I can have the notes in front of me now, and basically learn a tune and put the book away now, hear it, and get it. I didn't use to be able to do that. But yeah, I, I've depended on music a whole lot and it's just within the last year that I've even sometimes walked into a jam and not even brought my book and my stand and it's quite monumental. Or I'll go away from the jam and I'll have my bag of books and y music stand and I'll say to my daughter, hey, I didn't even open a book tonight, you know, so. Like last night I went to one and it was just a few of us at a house and I didn't open in and I even learned a new song without, without, without the music, so. I'd like to try to do it more, but sometimes the books add little licks and things that, you know, you might hear it from a certain fiddler and you might think, oh I'd like to play it a little bit different or put something here, embellish here or there, a lot of the books will have an exact version on how some famous fiddler has played it and it's a little more fancy, you know, so. Especially for contests, my daughter does fiddle contests, and I just did a few this year, and the only reason I did them is because I thought to myself, well here I am teaching fiddle maybe I'm not even a fiddler. So I thought if I went to a couple fiddle contests, see how I do in competition, um, you know, that would kind of consolidate it in my mind that yes I can teach it cause I've got. So I, I did actually pretty well and I was pleased with myself. And um, it's a little different style though in the competitions, it's more a Texas style fiddling, and not quite the old-time, there's several different styles of fiddling. So I had to learn the difference in them. It's been quite an education, but I'm glad for it. During the school year from September to May I'm busy with the classical because I play with symphonies down in Newark and Granville, and I play with the Knox symphony. And I sometimes get called um from the Delaware, um Central Ohio symphony. So I'm busy with the classical stuff, so the summer is more my time to be a little bit more laid back and go to jams and I play for weddings from about April to August. And it just keeps a good balance for me, you know, so.

TJ: When did you start playing for weddings?

ML: Oh, um my daughter and I have been playing the wedding for abut 2 or 3 years, but I've played for banquets and weddings for the last about 10 years or so just here and there, not real steady, and then in the last couple years we've got more. Um my son plays the violin when he feels like it, too, and my daughter plays, my other daughter plays the flute, so we used to have a family band, a family group, that we would play for nursing homes, we'd play for Christmas

programs, and we played for mother-daughter banquets, as a quartet kind of. And I would take music that was either piano music or one violin and I would rewrite it for myself and my two other violins, my kids, and the flute. I would write 4-part harmony for all the stuff, and it took a lot of time, but now I've got a lot of music built up. But now they're really busy and my one son hasn't played in a long time, so it's basically my daughter and I that play the violin. But that was fun, and we did a lot of, we did a lot of things. We played for, our big highlight was that we played for a 50th high school, no a 1950 high school reunion for Fredericktown, Ohio. And they gave us a song list and it was songs that we had never played, because it was all these old swing type of songs, and it was a big challenge to take and re-write all these songs, like "Blue Velvet," "Sentimental Journey," um, "Stardust," and my kids had never played that style, but we listened to tapes, I re-wrote the music with the harmonies in there, and they, they did fairly well. And everybody had tears in their eyes, all these people at the reunion and they came up and said it was wonderful, so. But that was a challenge really for us as a family, to learn and play that. It was actually quite fun, and I did use a keyboard for that, for some of them. We had 2 violins, a flute, and a keyboard, and it just added a little bit of, you know, background there. But that, that was a big challenge. That was about 4 or 5 years ago that we did that. But we, we had a good time, it was like an adventure, you know, learning a whole new era of music for us, you know, cause we're used to the, you know, the other kind of music.

TJ: So did you teach your kids to play?

ML: Actually no. I started Phillip and I started Sarah, but it usually works out a lot better if your kids take from someone else if you're musical. Um, my parents never taught us a note. They played really well. It, I think musicians have a tendency to, if they teach their own kids, expect more or expect that your child will learn how you learned, and it's quite a rude awakening to realize that your child's not gonna learn the way you did. And it helps just as far as tension goes to just let them be responsible to another teacher and come and practice, and I would help them if they needed help. Um, Sarah basically I, I did start her and gave her a lot of violin lessons and then she had several different teachers and then finally had a fiddle teacher here in town that she took from. The took piano lessons from Patty Pelfrey over at Kenyon. [TJ: She's my teacher] Right, Sarah and Phillip both took, Phillip took for about 8 years and Sarah took for about 4 or 5 and um, they both still play the piano. And it just, it really does help tension-wise. They play better for somebody else, you know, rather than Mom, you know. And you know, I, I also, I did try it and it got to the point where you know I would set aside lesson time for them but I was always in the middle of supper preparations or you know some other household task, and it takes a real effort to set that time aside like you would for someone else, cause your own kids end up getting the short end of the stick, you know, you just don't. So I, I thought it was better to send em to someone else to learn, and then did pretty well. It was all right with me. So.

TJ: Um, well can you talk a little bit about the difference between playing in uh classical ensembles like the symphonies and then uh, string bands, like old-time bands?

ML: Difference as far as um like how you do it? Or the whole program, or?

TJ: Yeah, I mean, how it gets put together, and maybe some of like just the general aesthetic that's involved.

ML: Yeah, well obviously when you play with the symphony you know, everybody has been practicing and practicing and you rehearse, it's very organized. You know, the director is there, you've got your music in front of you all the time, which is, you know what I had since I was 10 years old because they had a beginning orchestra and I got into that. So that's what I was used to. So breaking away from that, when you're playing with the old-time basically everybody's in the circle, and it's the toe going that it your director, because everybody's got to be right there with the person that started the music. And if you're not listening, you know, you're not gonna fit in with anybody's group. You don't have that director, and that's what I was so used to seeing was that director up there, following him, and you have to get used to just hearing the acoustical instruments. Basically the guitar are the ones that are gonna keep your beat going, uh mandolin is also considered a percussion instrument in a, in a bluegrass band because they've got the chop. And that's a help. I learned the difference between the bluegrass and a old-time mandolin as far as the way it's played, a bluegrass banjo and an old-time banjo, so there's a difference between the two instruments as far as not maybe the instrument itself, but the way it's played in that setting. And um, everybody in a, in a old-time or a bluegrass jam when you get together, you just take your turn around the circle calling out the song that you want, and if you know it you join in, if you don't, you learn it. You learn it in a hurry, you know. Um, in an old-time group you're all playing together, and you play the song how ever many times you want. Sometimes you'll play one song for 5 straight minutes because you're aware that maybe somebody doesn't know it quite as well, or somebody wants to try something new while you're doing it, okay. So you'll keep playing it and playing and then somebody'll stick a foot up, usually the person that called it, and that's your sign that that song's gonna end. Now in bluegrass you'll have normally, for sure a bluegrass banjo, maybe a couple guitars, an upright bass, mandolin, often a dobro. And each instrument when you play a tune with a bluegrass band will have what's called a break and in the break that instrument kinda will come out in the forefront a little louder and the other instruments will back off a little bit. So you have to get used to knowing, and watching people's eyeballs because they'll kind of nod at the instrument that they want to take off and you've got to be ready to take off on that. Now I'm not to that point yet with bluegrass and I don't actually quote unquote get into the bluegrass as much because I'm a little more timid about playing the licks and the breaks. My daughter does pretty well with it, she really loves bluegrass, where I tend to go toward the old time. And um, it just, you've got to be on your toes to be watching and um, a lot of the bluegrass has a lot of singing and harmony parts to it, so when you go that a lot of times the fiddle will just be doing little chops um on a chord or very subtle harmony in the background cause you don't wanna, I learned that you don't wanna ever be playing their melody line while they're singing, cause that can, you know, pull away from the vocals. So bluegrass is a little different there. And in the old-time, the banjo will do what's called frail. Um, and it'll pick in the bluegrass. The banjo will pick and do the, you know the fancy stuff where in the old time banjo he'll be frailing. It's like a strumming thing, but he's throwing his 3rd and 4th finger onto the strings and playing often a melody line with the chord and you can definitely hear that, so it's a whole nother style of frailing. It's also clawhammer, and the banjo neck is about 6 inches

longer than a regular banjo, it's quite a long, long neck. Um and in the mandolin the melody line will be picked out in the old-time a little more, where like I said the mandolin in a bluegrass will be more chopping and chords straight through. But then when he has a break he'll come out and shine, you know, that that mandolin. Normally won't find a uh dobro with an old-time group. And in our old-time group we have hammer dulcimer but not in our band, cause we kind of designed our band that we have after the old-time Appalachian string bands, which we have 2 fiddles, 2 guitars, a bass, and a frailing banjo, just 6 of us. But when we get together and jam we'll get other instruments that come in and we play pretty much the same kind of music, but there's a couple, couple tunes we like to just kinda keep for our band so that they're special and [?]. But, um, yeah you just, you just have to be really listening when you're playing with the old-time and the, and the bluegrass because that's the only way that you can catch on. Someone'll shout out a key and, you know, if you don't have your music in front of you you've got to right away know what chords and what notes a gonna be in that key to play the tune. If you don't know the tune you can at least play the notes of the chord, and that's what I've learned a lot with the bluegrass. You can play background harmonies really subtly and easily just by knowing the key you're playing in. Where in orchestra, you've got your music right there, you know what key you're in cause it's written right there on the, right there on the music, and you know you better know what, better know what you're doing or you have no business playing the group group, you know. So that's basically the difference. It's a lot more informal, a lot more banter and chatting going on between songs.

TJ: So would you say with most fiddle tunes, you would be able to play them either in A, G, or D, pretty much? Do they, do individual tunes switch back and forth?

ML: Um, some tunes can be played in um A or D. The reason A and D are nice for fiddles is because A and D are also open string on a fiddle, and you can use them for what's called droning, where you can play the melody line but then have the open string coming through on harmony which gives that fiddle ring. Um, but there are tunes like, for instance "boil the Cabbage Down," um, a lot of times it's written in D, sometimes it's written A, and I have it written in G. And it also, that all depends on the person who is singing it, what fits their voice. You can play um, a couple other tunes in other keys, one was "Sail Away Ladies," it was written in D and then we found it written in G. And it just, it's a personal preference, but most tunes are gonna be, pretty much stick with a key, you know. But those 3 keys, I threw those out just because those are basically the most common. Now we play things in C, you know, but you're gonna find that the tunes, most of them have words to them, and they, they've got to be in a key that is friendly to that person's voice, you know, so. We do a lot of A, G, and D tunes. And like I said, we have a couple C. Now in bluegrass there's a lot of E tunes. E and once in a while some B-flat, so they, they kind of, and even a couple in B, so you get 5 sharps there, 4 sharps. And they're tougher to play fast on a fiddle, where A, D and g are fairly easy to play fast on fiddle cause the way your fingering is. So that's the difference there.

TJ: So how did the barn jam get started?

ML: The barn jam, well, um, let's see we had our fourth one this year. I'm trying to think. I guess cause we were, I think my kids kind of were talking about it, and I had a couple friends that you know, thought it's be fun to come over since we had space to do it. And we're always driving, you know, clear to Malabar or clear up to Mansfield or wherever and I thought, well why doesn't everybody just come here, you know? And I'm, I've always liked to entertain, I grew up with my mom having company every Sunday so, we just, we have big families, my husband and I and so we just have always liked to have big groups of people over. So it kind of fell in together the first year along with a 4-H um pot luck that they were gonna have and they wanted to have it at our house. And I think the kids were talking about, well why don't we get music too just for fun? So I thought, well why don't we just make it one big jam, you know? So we invited people that I had played with, and I didn't know half the people I know now even, but we invited people that we played with in the last 6 months or so that we knew. And the first one actually was pretty nice, and we had it up in the bank barn, but we had it in the bank barn twice, but in the years since then, the last 2 years the bank barn's been full of hay. So we had to have it down in the other barn. And it actually works out better cause some of the people are elderly and it's easier for them to walk straight across the yard than up the hill, and you know, there's holes in the, holes in the entrance to the barn there. But um, I think it really started out just kind of a combination pot luck thing and then it just grew from there. And we used to play, like I said, up at Malabar, and then that group moved away from Malabar down to the fire station at 13, and um 71 there, where Cracker Barrel is there's a fire station up there. We played up there for a long time and it got really big. And there were some people there that were playing tunes that, it wasn't necessarily that we didn't like, but they were like old tunes from the 40s and a lot of cowboy stuff, and we were really missing the old-time, which is what some of us core people wanted to play. So we broke off even from them and started meeting up in Johnsville just with about 5 or 6 of us, and strictly old-time. We get once in a while a bluegrass tune in there but it's basically old-time the whole time, so. And it's nice because if we want to play something 10 times, we play it 10 times because maybe we want to learn it, you know. You get zoned out, you know, in a song, you close your eyes and it's like, you can play this song forever, you know. But I think they're still meeting up there on Monday nights at the fire station. Um I haven't been there for over, probably almost 2 years. But now it's not Monday nights it's Tuesday nights, just because schedules have changed, so. I didn't use to be able to go during orchestra season because orchestra practice is on Monday night, but now they've moved it to Tuesdays so if it doesn't interfere with anything I have going with the family, I try to get up there. My husband's a fireman so he works every third day. So every third Tuesday he's on duty and I feel like I can get out of the house and not worry about you know, taking away from family time, and go up there with my daughter, so. I did last night. It's always fun, it's. I was laughing as I came in the door last night with her, I said isn't it weird I'm sitting here teaching all day long and you'd think I'd had enough of music and then I go and play for 4 hours in somebody's house in the snow. But, you know, musicians that we, that I play with, we could jam all night, and and you don't realize. And some people that don't play that kind of music don't realize that it is so enjoyable, it's very cathartic. You know, I mean I don't feel tired, I didn't get home till 11 o'clock, and it's just really really relaxing. You know it's very, it takes away the tensions of the day, so, I enjoy it whenever I can I go, but it's a little more difficult during the winter, so.

TJ: I find the same thing when I play with some of my friends, and one of my friends we play rock most of the time. Well, you know, we could play for hours and, I play with another guy and we could jump between rock and blues and old-time and bluegrass, and so between all those you got 10 hours worth of material.

ML: And you could just keep going and going, right, I know. And I've had, I've had the group over to my house and we'll play and play and my husband will come in, I'm going to bed, and we're like, well, we're gonna keep playing. And they just don't understand, you know, and that's okay cause it's a whole nother thing that, you know I hate to look at the clock and go, oh you know we really are gonna have to quit, you know, but it's one of those things where I, I've known some of my friends to just play till 3 and 4 in the morning and you realize, oh my goodness we've been playing for 8 hours straight! You know, drifting from one group to the next or something, so it's a, it's a musician thing I think that you only understand when you really can enjoy music like that. Well that used to be my only time to practice, too, when my kids were small. I'd get em to bed and then I'd sit down at the piano and I'd practice, or I'd go in the um, back room there and shut the door and practice my violin for hours. So I'm used to playing in the wee hours. I don't do that now, I usually practice during the day between students, and on Saturdays I do a lot of practicing, but I try not to stay up too late cause I'm getting old. Can't do that, it's not good on the body.

TJ: Yeah. So uh, [cough] sorry. How do you, who do you invite to the barn jam?

ML: Um, pretty much my band and then we have friends who just love the music, don't play, but want to come to hear. And um, I invite my students who play fiddle, so their families come, and then there's some people from the other group that I would always invite. One of them, um, he plays the bass and he's older, and there's just a few other guitar players. I try to balance it out and invite several guitar players and so that give us a bass. If only 2 of em come, you know, at least I've invited several so I get, you try to get a variety of instruments to come. And I met a new, a couple last year in January, that the husband plays the guitar and the wife plays the hammer dulcimer. So I invited them and they came. Um, basically it's just people that I know have said, if you have it again, let me know, you know. And you get to have the same people over and over. Um, some of them I just see at the barn jam and then I don't see them the rest of the year. Some of them are with a bluegrass group that I used to jam with that um, they got together and they actually formed a band and did one small recording at a studio, but I think their band has since broke up. But they all, they all play really well. We ha da really tight group. It was a bluegrass group, and there was a guitar player, a mandolin player, bass player, 2 guitars, and a couple of them were some guys from church that played the guitar that we invited. Now they don't always come, but pretty much just friends that I've played with over the last 4 years that I've gotten to know just through the groups. Friends of ours that we know like to listen to the music and enjoy it. And it has fallen right in sync with the 4-H pot luck, too, so the 4-Hers stay for a little. That's what, it's kind of fun for them to hear all that.

TJ: So is ev-, is everybody who is in your band, were they all there this year?

ML: No, no. Um, let's see. We were missing the two guitar players this year, they couldn't make it. But everybody else was there.

TJ: Who else is it?

ML: um, the guy, J.R. Rhodebeck who plays the fiddle, he's kind of been my teacher, in a way I call him that because I just learned from watching him a lot, you know, and he's helped me out with different things, loaned me books and he's made tapes for me and things, and just really, and he's helped Sarah out, too. Um, and then I don't know if you saw Carl and Betty Ross. He made her that bass. [TJ: yeah] Yeah, those two are the bass and the frailing banjo. So it's J.R. and I on the fiddle, and them on their 2 instruments, and then we have 2 guitar players. Her name is Nancy Strayer and uh Roy King. He's from New Washington and she's from North Woodbury's (?). So we're pretty spread out as a group, but what we do is when we get a gig we practice about 2-3 times before the gig, because we're all playing, like J.R. and Carl and Betty and me, and Nancy, we all see each other sometimes on the jam nights, okay. And Roy and J.R. get together and play during the week. So we're all playing at different places, then when we get together we have a song list. And we practice off the song list, throw in a couple new ones, and come up with a list for that particular gig. And it doesn't take, take a whole lot, you know, so that's what we usually do.

TJ: Do you go out and is it somebody who actively seeks gigs?

ML: No, because what we want to do is we want to keep ours just for fun. We, we don't want to get it so that we're like structurally playing every month for something big, you know, like we, it started out for, our name, our name is "Rough Draft," is the name of our group and it started off 4 years ago, or 3, I think it was 3 years ago at, no it's 4 now, the Knox County Fair in the draft horse barn. They told us, wouldn't it be fun if you guys could come and play your fiddles? My daughter and I. And she didn't want to, and so I called J.R. and I called Carl and Betty and Nancy. Well, Carl came, Nancy came, and J.R. came, and the 4 of us played right inside the draft barn all evening on Friday night of the Fair, and it was a blast. We had people stopping by and just listening, and draft were sitting there clapping, and it was a lot of fun and actually that night, I can't remember if it was 3 or 4 years, I'm just not sure. But I know we didn't play in '99, we played in, yeah it was '98 or '97, but I just can't remember. But anyway, um, I earned 9 new songs just that night, cause you can't set a stand up and put your music out, you know, and so they, it was just so informal and so fun and Nancy is a guitar player that knows the words to a lot of these old-time songs, and she is hysterical, cause she knows funny songs and it was really fun. We did a lot of vocals that night that they learned, and um, just had a good time. But we were trying to think of a name for our group and here we were in the draft barn, so we just started calling it Rough Draft, and I thought that was really catchy. We didn't want something long and you know, drawn out, that you know, sounded corny. So after that, let's see, we, we decided to go ahead and get more people together for this group, because Carl I think has more connections. He and his wife play for nursing homes, they own a llama farm, and they take their llamas to nursing homes and they do a lot of playing in the Appalachians over the summer, and they go to a

lot of festivals, and they play on stage together, and they've actually cut a tape. And it's really nice, but um, we've just gotten like one or two every 6 months to do. Like we played for an ice cream social. And we played for the Galion library last year, and we played for em this year. And just little things here and there. We actually played for an outdoor wedding, that was fun. And, keeping it real low key, we don't often get paid to play. You know, they'll feed us, something like that. It, we want to keep it lighthearted. They found, they, a couple of them, J.R. and Roy, were in another band, a, a Irish band, and it got tense when the leader of the band started really pushing the performance, performance, performance, and all of us are people who are busy with our own families, with our own very busy schedules, and any more than what we're doing now would make it too serious, you know what I'm saying? So we want to just keep it lighthearted and it has so far worked out really well that way, that, you know, we get together and practice a few times before we have to do something, and it stays, you know, really happy and lighthearted and upbeat, and everybody seems to be okay with it. So even though it's an organized group, we're not like every Wednesday getting together, you know, it's you know, like I said 2-3 times before we have to play and then we do it, so that's about it.

TJ: Actually, Carl and Betty actually sent me a copy of that tape when I sent out the release forms.

ML: Really? It's pretty amateur, but when they play together in person it's nice, it's nice. But they do really well. He's got a lot of songs under his belt as far as tunes to play (?), oh man. So, actually did a couple new ones last night. That's the problem, if I don't get em down on tape I don't remember em the next day, you know. You have to play em again here. So, I've been, I got a little tape recorder now that I just take along to jams. I find that easier than taking the music and trying to play. Take the tape recorder, tape it, listen to it the next day, and play with the tape and then I didn't even get my music out. It seems to be more in my head if I do it that way than trying to memorize music, I'm just not a good memorizer. So, it's coming. It's part of my brain that's just starting to be stimulated and you know, it's probably all there at one time and came away from it a little bit. I know I probably could memorize a little better when I was younger. It's weird.

TJ: Yeah, I, when I, I never even started reading guitar music until 3 years ago when I started taking classical, and I've been playing since I was 11.

ML: So you're like, just the opposite of me. Isn't that something. Since the time you were 11? Isn't that funny. Yeah, so it's a big switch.

TJ: in high school I stopped taking lessons for about 4 years, and I would just sit in my room and run through every song on a CD and learn em all.

ML: By ear?

TJ: Yeah.

ML: Goodness. Well, I've got so many books, I've got, that whole cupboard's full, that whole cupboard's full, that's got some and around the corner there's some, and I got a whole file in my bed-. I mean, you know, I love music, that's the left brain side of me. I guess I would say, for me, the left brain side of me is the classical and teaching and the um, the reading the notes and the learning it. Then the right brain side of me is the side that wants to go jam and learn the songs, you know by ear and just do it, you know, so. My parents were really left brain-right brain balanced, very very much and I think the kind of imparted that and I'm a middle child, so I just kind of encircled everything, you know, which is pretty typical, so. I've always wanted to do way too much, the overachiever here, that's what I am. I don't ever want to stop learning and that's the neat thing, you know, I, and it, music [end of side A] I got students at 10:30, I should be fine. I better clean the house first. Got a mess here (?). Um, anyway for the Irish and Celtic I uh, go up to Shreve. They have a, this lady Sue Cahill has a, she opens her home. The first Friday night of the month is all Irish, Celtic. And the third Friday night of the month is all old-time. And it's just jamming in her little room and she's got books and CDs and tapes that you can buy, she's got a little shop, she's got instruments, she's got button boxes and concertinas, and she's got those drums, those Irish, I don't know what you call them, you know they have the big circular drums that they use with the Irish. Um, she's got, I don't think, she doesn't have any fiddles but just all kinds of little percussion type things that you can play, the shaker eggs, you know spoons, small things. And then like I said she's got accordions and concertinas. But anyway, that has kind of gotten around to where, um, I've played for a contra dance with her group as a substitute for the fiddler that couldn't do it. And we have a wedding next fall that I'm going to be playing with her group, and then I played with their group up at the Millersburg, um antique festival a couple times. You know, so that's a whole nother part when we do the Irish. And um Lorraine, the hammer dulcimer player, and J.R., and then Roy King the guitar player, um, our other group, we've formed what we call the Other Band, and we had no clue what to call it because we had this wedding to play for since two years ago the kids got engaged. And they were gonna get married in the fall of '99, but then they postponed the wedding for a year so they could get through school, so they got married in the fall of 2000. Now this wedding was written up in the Mansfield paper, I don't know if you saw that big Renaissance wedding where it was in costume, all the people had Revolutionary War-type clothing and it was a just a totally colonial wedding. And we had to play for the reception. They wanted all Irish kind of music. So that was a whole nother, you know, a whole nother thing, but we've been playing and calling ourselves the Other Band, because we have a band, and we just said, okay we're the Other Band now. Very original name, but um, also because they were all part of that Irish group that I told got a little too serious and just kind of quit and broke away from it. And they said well we really still like the music, so we'd get together in the living room here and just play Irish music together and we just said, well we have to call ourselves something, and there you go, well we're the Other Band. So that worked out kind of fun. But yeah, I enjoy that music too. It's very fast, I'm not able to pull away from the music on that part. I still have to use my music. It doesn't come as easy memorizing the Irish as it does the other forms. Maybe someday.

TJ: What's the difference?

ML: oh, the Irish is a lot of jigs and reels, and they're so, they're so fast and I just get al mixed up when I play em. They all, a lot of them sound a lot alike. Some of the slower ones I can do, and the waltzes I can do without my music, but the fast ones I've got to sit there and read the notes. And it doesn't matter. Some of the other people do, too. So I don't feel so bad.

TJ: Yeah, I know sometimes I'll look at recordings of Irish music and they'll do a set of a few different reels or a few different jigs together, and you listen to it and you're like, when did they switch from the last one cause I, you know you can't really tell.

ML: Yeah, unless you're really listening. But then as you get to know tunes, you'll hear em. You'll hear em go, normally they'll all be in the same key, you know, and that way they go together, that's what we do, we have like sets of 3, sets of 2, sets of 3 that we'll do. And they all go nice, like maybe there's a fast, a little bit slower, then a real fast one or something like that. But I know what you mean, when you listen to em it's like, oops, yep they are on the next one. But yeah I just, I guess I just from listening to em I get recognize a lot of em and I can hear em and I know, oh that's that song, but I, I still can't play them without my music. But I enjoy the Irish a lot. It's um, a little more predictable sometimes, because, you know my goal is more how I've been trained you know, a lot of slurs, I, I enjoy that, but it's, it's good to do it all. I went to couple workshops actually. She had a guy from Canton um come down and he did some workshop on Scottish, Irish and Celtic, and taught us some of the differences and the roots behind the Scottish music and the Irish music, the different ways of the accents and the held notes, and the difference between jigs, reels, um [?], airs, and you know, and it was very very interesting. I learned a lot. I probably don't remember all, everything I learned, but I have music and notes for everything I learned. It was like 20 bucks to go to this workshop, but it was really really nice. And we keep telling her, you've got to have another one, because I know she could fill it up. Um, the last, the last name of the guy was Whitaker and I can't remember what his first name was, but he was, I think it was John. He was from Canton. He knew a lot about Irish, just made it look so easy. At the time I went to my first one I had just started doing my fiddle stuff, and so I was very violiny, and he recognized it right away. He said, oh you're a classical player, I'm like oh is it that obvious? And people will do that now and again, oh, you must have classical background. And I always think I'm, you know, making such strides looking like a fiddler, but it's always gonna be there. Which it's not all bad, but, you know, it's something, something I'll carry with me I guess.

TJ: Yeah, well like I remember at the barn jam you had the elec-, electric tuner, tune up, and I said, oh, that's the classical violin player.

ML: Well no, actually at the jams everybody's got those. [TJ: really?] Yeah, because it's too hard to say, give me an A like we do in orchestra a everybody try and tune to it, because if you get off a little bit during a jam, you can pull those right into your own instrument, and people could keep playing around you and you could tune real quick. So actually I would say, you see those at jams. Everybody's got to. [TJ: I didn't realize] Yeah, at the ones I've been to, they've all got tuners. And I take it to orchestra and everyone's like, what's that? But I take it just because um,

if I change strings, like I had, I had a string go on me Monday night at orchestra, and I had to real quick put a new string on and of course it's gonna fluctuate a lot because it's stretching out and it's new, you know about that, and so I, it was handy to have, cause I could just real quick check it, you know, tune it up, instead of asking my stand partner, can you give me an A? You know, and that can get kinda old after a while so. I, I actually have seen them more at the jams and now I'm using it for teaching now where I used to take the A from the piano, and now that I've got the new piano the A is a good 440. So I use it because it's a quicker way of tuning, rather than, you know, rather than trying to keep tuning to my violin to tune to the tuner, the kids can do it themselves while I'm getting their music set up, you know, a lot of the kids are getting to the point where they can do that, so. It's quite handy. I really like it. I didn't spend an arm and a leg on the one that I have. I probably could've, but I thought no I'm not gonna to cause, it could get dropped yeah, and you only spent 30 bucks. But it's a nice one, actually. You can go up to 230 on those things easily, I know. In fact, they all really do the same thing. As long as you keep the batteries in there.

TJ: Yeah, that's not gonna make you stay in tune any better.

ML: Yeah, I know. You spend it on a name or it's a little heavier duty stuff, you know, but mine's pretty good, it helps me out a little bit. And we've noticed, just my pupils and I, how fast it goes tuning now. And we can get really accurate, cause if we both are going +2, mine has a, um, a green light-red light system, where if it's right on the button it'll be green, where if it's a little sharp it'll be red to the sharp side, and if it's a little flat it'll be red to the flat side. But I have a tendency, just because of my teacher, to tune a little bit on the sharp side rather than middle to flat. And my ear will tune just a tiny bit up, but if everybody's tuning, like it has +2, +3, +4, if I say keep it to +2, and we're all doing it +2, it's gonna be right on the button, so that makes it easy. And a lot of times I just, my violin, I, I use it so much every day for people. Sometimes I'll just grab one of my fiddles, to, instead, to give it a break, you know from the tuning. I'll tune it in the morning, and I don't want to just keep tuning and tuning and tuning over and over to match the other kids, so I'll tune it to my tuner and I'll have the other kids match it to what I've got mine tuned to, and then it's easier, you know, easier on my instrument. That thing gets played a lot.

TJ: Well that's good for it.

ML: Yeah, it is, it is. And I don't leave it on the floor at night if you notice, it gets a chair. It's just too cold, I take care of it like a baby. I told my daughter no put yours over there on the floor, and she did. So, she's borrowing a mandolin from J.R., she said that, when she wants to. Well she and my other daughter are taking banjo lessons. And this banjo guy is also teaching her some mandolin licks, and since the mandolin is tuned the same a fiddle, she might be able to incorporate some of these mandolin licks into some of her fiddle tunes, so she's got kind of a method to her madness here. So she's gonna try to do that. And she kind of had fun up there last night at the jam cause it was just 1, 2, 3, 5 of us over there at the house. And she's doing pretty good, cause once you know your fingering on violin you can pick up songs pretty easily on the

mandolin, so, I just, I try to stay away from tackling any more instruments. I play the accordion, too, my dad always had it, one of the great big ones, but I've got a great a great big one with a full, like, 2 ½ octave keyboard, full chords, it's got major, minor, and it's got sevenths, and it's got 2 of the cadences off to the side, sevenths, and I get that out, oh a couple times a year, but you know I'm just afraid if I get too many things going on I won't have time to do anything except music, and I do have a household here that I have to take care of, so, you know. I, if there's a fifth week of the month I don't teach. I told my students that. And it works out that, oh maybe every few months there's a fifth week, and it might not be the whole week, like it might just be the Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday people that have a fifth month, um, Tuesday, or fifth Wednesday, and it just gives me couple days in the month there where I know I don't have students to come in and I can either do something around the house or concentrate on some practicing, or write out some music for my students that need something written out, and that works out good. It's just kind of a standing agreement that I right at the beginning, that if there's fifth week, no lessons, and it gives my a break, a breather. Which I need sometimes. So, there's one in January coming up. Plus I'll probably take the last week of December off because of Christmas break, so, anyway.

TJ: So, which do you prefer, violin or fiddle?

ML: Well, I've talked to other people about this. And you have to include the piano in there, because when I was talking about left brain-right brain. When I'm feeling like, Saturday mornings is my day that I set aside in the morning, to play something on the piano that I've never played before and this is what I've been doing for the last 5 or 6 years. Just sit down and sight read something hard. And that's like my left brain, when I want to work. And when I feel very very, oh just, like I don't have time to read a book and I know I should practice, I get out my violin and I practice my classical piece, I practice, you know, finger studies, exercise, etudes, that's my left brain side and I enjoy it when that's my mood. If it's the right brain side it's time for fiddle. My daughter and I can play fiddle for 2 hours and not realize the time's going by. So I enjoy when I'm sitting in symphony, I enjoy it immensely, I mean, I get lost in it, because I've been doing it so long. I love playing symphony music. And I love playing with classical quartets and playing for weddings, I really love that. Um, but at the same time the other side of my brain loves to do the fiddle stuff. I get tired, though, of the fiddle stuff. I don't know what that tells you. I can go to jams and jams and jams and suddenly I'll have a week where, you know, the day comes up for a jam and I'll just say, I just don't feel like doing it now. And I'll just kinda not get it out for a while. A while meaning a few days, I don't want to, you know, I'll let a couple weeks go by and not go to a jam and it, it's like it doesn't do anything, it doesn't hurt me any and, but where my violin, I think because that was what was my first love was my piano, and the classical, I, I don't get tired of that, you know. And the, the schedule of the classical is, yeah, it's every Monday night, then a concert, then a break, then every Monday night, but then you have this big Christmas break over the holidays, you've got like 4 weeks off, and then the rehearsals and the concerts that I do with the professional symphonies down in Newark and Granville, you rehearse once or twice and then have a concert. That's it. And it's a whole different caliber of playing, because, whereas the Knox symphony is um, people with other jobs who want to keep playing

music, and a lot of college kids, whether or not they're majoring in music or not, that's what, you know, the Knox Symphony is. You get a few people like myself and a couple others that do teach, you know, and music is pretty much their, their life, but at these other ones most of the people in the orchestra are professional musicians, you know, like they teach at a school or they teach privately. So the playing, it's just like a whole nother, you're in a whole nother world, and I love it, oh I love it. So I can't say I've really ever gotten tired of the classical, but when May comes and I'm done with the symphony regular stuff, I'm ready to stop. You know what I'm saying? And I'm ready to do the other stuff. But generally I am so focused on doing my own recitals, my students, that when May comes along I usually just take May, and I don't mark anything down, you know, because when I was home schooling that was our, our month to be finishing up our school, it was our month to be just, you know, wrapping up loosed ends, and I didn't want anything else on the calendar, and we'd go to a home school convention generally in June, and I just didn't want anything to kinda, you know, fog me from focusing. So that's kind of been my, my thing. So I'll have my recital in April, we finish up with symphony in April, and then May I just kinda, I'm ready to have a little break there, play in my garden, you know, and then once everything's in June comes along and I've got more weddings to play for and it picks back up and I do a lot of the old-time. But usually in the fall I'm so ready to go back to orchestra, you know. And I hadn't played any old-time jams for 2 months. We, we played for the library in Galion so we did get together and practice, but I hadn't played really just to kick off a jam since probably October. And um, and it was fun to get back to, but I guess, you know, for me, the classical because it was my first thing that I did and just being raised with that, hearing it all the time, I don't get tired of it. But there's times when I want to just listen to old-time CDs, or old-time music, and we, we were thinking about a trip, we went to South Carolina over Thanksgiving and it was really funny because my husband and I took turns driving with the kids and he likes to listen to what he likes. And we've kind of made it our policy, whoever's driving they get to have what they. And boy, I start driving and have my stuff on and the kids go, boy you sure can tell who's driving, cause all of a sudden it's all old-time. It was pretty funny. And he kept trying to find reasons to turn off the tape and listen to the weather. Don't worry about the weather, leave my tape on! It was kind of funny. But you know, then there's sometimes when you just want to listen to a good symphony on the tape and it just is so dependent on my mood, you know, music is been real cathartic for me just, you know, emotionally, really helps me out of the blues, or if I'm happy I'll sit down and play the piano, if I'm sad I'll play the violin.

TJ: Yeah I get, I feel that way sometimes doing this project listening to traditional music. And there's a song off a CD I have called "Memphis in the Meantime," and it's a bout, it's this guy saying he's really sick of country music and he just wants to go to Memphis and listen to blues. I get that song in my head all the time, like cause I'm like, oh my god if I hear, you know, one more old-time tune.

ML: Oh well, you'll soon be done, right?

TJ: Eventually.

ML: Really? How much do you have to do?

TJ: Well, hopefully the research will be done by the end of February.

ML: Oh really? What all do you have to research?

TJ: Oh it's just, I mean, just between recording music and interviewing people, and all that kind of stuff.

ML: Have you really learned a whole lot about it though, like isn't it really cool?

TJ: Oh yeah, yeah. I've been down to the square dances in Martinsburg a few times, [?], and I've gone down to Morgan once.

ML: You ever been to a contest? [TJ: no.] There's one January 14th.

TJ: Where?

ML: Baroque (?), Ohio. We're going down.

TJ: I'm supposed to, I'm recording Lisa Wagner on January 12th.

ML: Is she going down?

TJ: I don't know. She's playing fiddle contest stuff for me.

ML: That's who my daughter took from [TJ: Really?] Yeah. Well.

TJ: That's who a lot of people took from, it's, it's, it's funny, you know, you'd think you'd find like, there's only a few different like you know. Lisa took from

ML: [?] I thought she took from

TJ: I thought she took from Kenny Sidle.

ML: Yeah, she took from him, too.

TJ: and uh, you know I talk to all kind of people now who took lessons from her. And then there's Charlie Steinman, and I talked to people who took lessons from him, and people took lessons from his students.

ML: I have 2 of his students that take from me now. So. Yeah, they, they played all by ear when they took from him, and they came to me and wanted to learn to play the piano and they wanted

to learn to read notes because they wanted to um, be able to play more, more things and see things written out. So, that was fun. A lot of fun. He's getting pretty old. He's got his own style, and they, they learned a lot of tunes from him. So. He wasn't real careful about how they held their instrument and, but there were a couple things that they needed a little bit of boost with just because it would've helped them have a better tone, you know, so we worked on that, but, basically it was just teaching them to read notes and now they're doing, you know, position work and it's been a lot of fun. So. I talked to him for a while 2 years ago at Baker's, I don't know if you've ever been to Baker's. [TJ: mm-mm] It's a campground over up in Woodberry that um, they have a jam every, every year, and then they have a little stage set up, and you can play on stage. And it goes on, like they have it for from Thursday night till Sunday afternoon. People camp in, and then on Saturday they usually have a hog roast and the hog roast kind of fell by the wayside cause they were getting kind of old to be doing that themselves, so now it's just a big pot luck. But it's still fun. And our group played up there this year on stage. But Kenny was there last year and he talked to me for a while, he's so cool. He's even built violins, and he does some minor repairs and things, bow re-hairing. So.

TJ: So, uh, do you prefer teaching fiddle or violin?

ML: I like both. At this point probably, I can't say enjoy one more. I get into the violin more just because that's what I've always done. The fiddle, really a lot of the stuff I'm learning along with the kids, you know, as I go, and I've had to come up with my own methods of teaching fiddle because I've had people coming to me, saying I just want to learn fiddle, and I've had to, you know read up and study and think about, if they just want to learn fiddle, what it going to be the basics that they need. And then how am I gonna approach it, where a lot of the books that say teach yourself fiddle, or you know, you can teach, I've read the approaches that they use and found that it really does help, like I said before, to just start teaching in a key, get the basics down as far as fingerings and bowing and how to do it right with the open strings, and then teach in a key. So really I'm still kind of in a learning process myself of how to teach fiddle actually as fiddle. Um, and I, I think I'm coming up with a pretty good method myself of, of doing it cause the kids are learning. As far as violin it's more like second nature to me to do the violin. Um, so probably would say I, if I had to pick one or the other to teach and have to do one I'd do the violin. But, I, I, I really, I really do enjoy the fiddle. It's, it's hard to say. The kids that are really serious make it enjoyable, or any of them, you know, when they come to me and I know they've worked on something. You know, I've got one guy that's, he's gone by leaps and bounds this year, but him mom is quote unquote making him play in the Mansfield junior strings. So, he's a fiddler, but she's making him play in that, so he's getting a real broad range of teaching when he comes to my house. We spend a good half hour on fundamentals and position work, and you know etudes and things. And then we spend the last half hour on tunes and fiddle stuff, and he's got a violin piece he's working on, because I said if you're gonna play in Mansfield junior strings, you're gonna have to play classically. And when he went to his audition, the director could pick out that he was a fiddler, cause he wasn't using the whole bow. So we work on that, but I said, now you're gonna get to do like I do and think whatever, what setting am I in? I'm in orchestra, use my whole bow, oh I'm at a jam, so I don't have to do that. You know, so you have

to, you have to keep track of where you are and, you know that's that's good for him though, he's only 14. He's really, really zoomed this year. And those are the kind of students that I love. That I know practice and I don't even have to remind them, you know, to practice. They do it. And their parents are right on top of them to see that they do it. It's the ones that, you know, I've got to spoon feed em every week what they should have done, and I, I reassess, and I'm a little more strict now and let em know right up front, you know, if I notice there's not any progress, like that ones that the desire is more on mom's part than the kids, you know we go over it with the parents, and say maybe you'd better wait, you know, wait until it's more of a, the kid wanting to do it, not just the parent. Cause you can want your child to play all you want, but it's not gonna make them learn, you know, unless he really wants to. So, I had a girl like that, and it was sad because she played by ear, she, she had the technique down, and she'd taken Suzuki for 5 years, came to me, couldn't read a note. And I know there are a lot of kids that start Suzuki and do marvelous, but it's not for everybody. Some kids can take that transition, because Suzuki begins em when they're 3 or 4, and they start learning just by hearing the notes. They start by codes and fingerings. And yeah, in 2 years they're playing marvelous music, but a lot of them are dependent on the code system and the fingerings, and like I said, I've had two kids that came through here. One of em, she uh, she quit within a year and started piano from me, and now she's one of my best piano students. The other one took violin from me for 3 or 4 years, and it was just a struggle every week, but when she really had to do something, like she had to play a really beautiful Christmas tune one year, it was "O Holy Night," it went up into a position she'd never heard of before, but she could hear it and so she played it flawlessly, like she'd been playing in that position for, for years. But when she quit last year, her mom said, she hasn't picked it up once, so that tells me that it really wasn't in her heart to play, you know, and it's sad. You don't like to see that, but then I said, you know maybe someday she'll pick it back up. And if they don't really want to I can sense it. I've got some really good kids that practice hard and they're what makes it really enjoyable. The beginning stages are difficult if you know that the child does not have an ear, does not have the ability, but they want to play. And I've had a couple like that, that want to play so bad, but just didn't have it. And I'm willing to keep working with them as long as the parents will keep bringing em to the lessons, but I'm pretty honest when I talk to parents. I usually reassess all the students with the parents in January, or at the break. Let em know, you know, progress, like think about their practicing. Because I can tell week to week whether they've worked. If I can give the same amount of things to one child who is at the same point as this child, and this child comes to me and is very well prepared, very positive, comes in and plays things flawlessly, but this one has practiced maybe 10 minutes a day, and, you know, and doesn't know their stuff, I know there's something there, it's you know, and if it's consistent that's one thing but is it's maybe once in a while that it happens it's another thing, so you know, it makes it tough. But I would say I enjoy, I enjoy both, when, when the kids are well prepared. And when they enjoy and I can give em that enthusiasm by keeping things in front of that that, you know, I explain to them, that this is your meat and vegetables, these etudes and scales, that's your meat and vegetables. Now this fun piece, that's your dessert. You know, practice this first, and then practice this. This is the building blocks, this is a, you know, a reward for working hard. So they have a schedule of how to practice, you know. And I can tell if they've gone to the dessert first, you know. When they're got the piece down but boy they don't have the building

blocks, then we put the pieces away for a week, and say okay we're gonna work on some building blocks.

TJ: I have, that's what I do.

ML: What, go to your dessert first?

TJ: Yeah.

ML: Oh well. Maybe the dessert is the right brain. I think that's what it is, the right brain. You just need to zone out and then the left brain side makes you work hard. And it's a discipline, cause you have, you have to make yourself sometimes. You really do. And I do too.

TJ: I actually find it easier to do exercises in the winter, cause my hands are cold that I really need to warm up, before I try to play anything.

ML: Yeah. Well I, I have a challenge now because I've got a handful of students who are so, I don't want to say so good, but they're getting to a point where I've, I've got to keep practicing so that I can play well what I've got to show them. You know, so that's a challenge, and that's exciting to me cause they've been taking from me from the very beginning, maybe 6 years, you know, 5 years. And that, that's really rewarding, so I really love that. And that's both instruments, piano and violin, and fiddle, so, of course the fiddler haven't been taking from me for so long because I've only really started actually teaching fiddle for about 3 years. So people found out, oh yeah, you know, we know somebody that plays the fiddle, and at that point I was like, no I don't play the fiddle. Well you could teach us how to play. Well, I can try. So, I've got so many books now though. You know, ad I know what works. You're getting all this background noise with everyone [?] around here. Crackling fire, people coming in the door.

TJ: Well, I think that's about all I really had to ask. Who else should I talk to?

ML: Oh, I think you should talk to Carl and Betty, or J.R. They could really give you, any one of them, those 3, cause they are just totally into the old-time. And J.R. can play bluegrass, too. So I think you should try them. Carl and Betty, they're great. They are, they're a neat couple. You have their number?

TJ: Yeah they sent me a little letter with the tape and everything, said to stop by if I was in the area. They live, that's in Morrow County, right?

ML: Well, I was just up there last night, it takes 20 minutes from my house. 20-25, not that far from here. It's just, you go up 314 to Woods, Northwoods area, into Johnsville and when 42 cuts across you go straight on up. It's not that hard to find. Um, so I was gonna say if, if you want to go Tuesday night with me up to the jam, you might be able to talk to them then. Next Tuesday night, I don't know if you're busy on Tuesday nights. Cause J.R. and they, they will both be

there, and you might be able to talk to them for a little while. Either after or before.

TJ: I could always bring my guitar.

ML: There you go, you could strum along with us. That'd be fun. No rock'n'roll now. No blues. Have to just keep, keep the strumming going. Um yeah, that that would be a good thing to do though cause, if you needed old-time, cause they. Or even Nancy, she's cool, and she might be there. Just come and take your chances who's there. Cause Mark also, the guy that plays the mandolin and guitar, he plays both. In fact he plays more than that. He does a little bit of rock'n'roll, he's just very versatile. So he might be one to talk to. Probably get a good interview with him. Well, I probably should start getting my house cleaned for students. Hope you got what you need. You think? Hope I answered everything the way you thought I would.

TJ: Well, if it all just goes the way you think it's gonna be then it's not, it's not worth doing.

ML: Yeah, too predictable, right? Well, I'm glad the time worked out. Worked out good for me.
[end of interview]